



E-ISSN: 2664-603X
P-ISSN: 2664-6021
IJPSG 2021; 3(2): 110-111
www.journalofpoliticalscience.com
Received: 10-05-2021
Accepted: 23-06-2021

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Women's participation in politics in India

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Abstract

Background: India is world's largest democracy yet the representation of women in Parliament remains low. In the 17th Lok Sabha only 78 women MPs were elected.

Objectives

1. To analyze the nature of political representation of women.
2. To analyze factors which influence women's representation.

Aim: To study political representation of women in the largest democracy of the world.

Research Methodology

1. Qualitative Method - It would include collecting, interpreting and analyzing data.
2. Primary research- It would include survey, interviews, Questionnaires in Delhi.
3. Secondary method- It would involve study of journals, newspapers, reports of various organizations.

Result: Though the representation of women have increased yet it remains low when compared with other nations.

Keywords: Political representation, women

Introduction

Political representation is the activity of making citizens present in public policy making processes why political actors working for the interest of citizens. Hanna Pitkin defines representation as "to make present again". Since ancient times representation women have been abysmally low with a few exceptions of Razia Sultan, Rani Laxmi Bai, Sarojini Naidu etc.

Political representation is the hallmark of democratic setup. Democracy implies equality of all humans, men and women. As against this women are excluded from different walks of life more visibly in politics. Despite the Preamble providing for equality as one of the objectives and inclusion of fundamental rights, directives principles, Art. 324, Art 325, Art 326 the representation of women in electoral politics is not up to the mark.

As per the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economic Research the luminosity growth of constituencies with women legislators increase about 15 percentage points per annum more than male legislators. Thus the increased representation of women in politics ensures not only women empowerment but also betterment of society at large.

The economic survey 2018 called for more representation of women in decision making saying their political participation has been low despite of their constituting 49% of the population. 17th Lok Sabha which elected highest women legislators the number stands at 78 only which is 14% of the house.

Women's participation in decision making can result in increased efforts to reduce infant mortality, maternal mortality, anemia, malnourishment and various other challenges related particularly to women and children.

The various reasons of low women representation in politics are patriarchal mindset with male domination of most fields, women being viewed as homemaker only, child bearing role is emphasised as the most important priority of women, absence of equal opportunities etc. The need of the hour is to bring about behavioural change through socialization process with significant role being played by family, school, peers. Also political parties are reluctant to distribute tickets to female contestants as they are considered weak by the society thus reducing the chances of winning election. The patriarchal administrative machinery, lack of knowledge and expertise of political functioning also creates hurdles in the efficient working of elected women representatives.

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In today's world of technology mass media and social media can play the role of torchbearer for instance the role of # Metoo campaign against sexual abuse gave courage to many women to share their hitherto unshared experiences.

Similarly making the women self dependant, providing them training and highlighting the role of successful women in various fields can encourage many to come out of their silos and play a larger role in decision making for betterment of society at large.

The reservation to women in Panchayats and urban local bodies through 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments respectively have bestowed women with an opportunity to participate in politics at village and local levels though the problems such as Sarpanch pati can't be neglected.

However there is no such reservation provision for state legislatures and parliament as far as women are concerned. There is a need to pass the Act reserving 33% seats for women in Parliament and state legistures. However reservation of the seats alone is not sufficient the need is to ensure active and actual participation of women in political processes by providing them skills and developing capabilities. India can learn from the examples of other countries such as Chile where the committee rewriting the constitution has 50% women members. In Switzerland 42% of those elected to lower house are women. By learning from the best practices of other nations India can increase the participation of women in politics.

Despite constituting around 49% of the population representation of women in House of Representatives / Lok Sabha is approximately 14% of the strength of the house.

The representation of women in general and urban women in particular in State / UT legislatures and Parliament would bring to light numerous women- oriented issues such as promoting use of sanitary napkins, institutional deliveries, separate toilets for girls, protection against sexual abuse. It will ensure betterment of women as well as society at large because Swami Vivekananda also said, "A bird can't fly by one wing only." Thus, the participation of women would go a long way in strengthening democracy and inclusive character of India. The participation of women in politics would also ensure the implementation of the objectives of Indian constitution to maintain liberty, equality and justice to all sections of the society. Also women participation in political spheres would result in women empowerment in other spheres of life as well.

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